

EDITORIAL

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This monograph represents a new kind of publication for FLM. The word ‘monograph’ indicates writing that is on a single or specialised subject. In this case the focus is *on learning*, in the context of mathematics education. It is *FLM Monograph 1*, indicating the hope that it will be the first of an occasional series. The articles in it developed out of a symposium held on 3–4 December, 2018, hosted by the University of Bristol’s Mathematics Education Research Network (MERN) to mark the official retirement of Laurinda Brown. (‘Official’ because she continues to supervise doctoral students, edit, review and write and is a member of the PME International Committee). Laurinda edited FLM volumes 23 to 27, hence, in part, the relevance of the symposium event for FLM. In this editorial I trace briefly how the symposium and publication came to be.

One inspiration for a symposium marking Laurinda’s contribution to mathematics education came from my hearing about other events marking retirements. If mathematics education, as a field, began in some period between 1950 and 1970 then mathematics educators retiring now hold the last of the living links to the founders of the discipline and an experiential knowledge of ways of working from that time; a moment, perhaps, for reflection. Laurinda’s generation knew and studied under the founders of our field, and it seemed important to me that a symposium mark her retirement.

In June 2018, I was fortunate to be able to attend the Canadian Mathematics Education Study Group (CMESG) conference and conversations there crystallised this fledgling idea into a commitment. The first two people I spoke to about it were David Reid and Elaine Simmt. Elaine’s reaction to the idea—that *of course* she would find a way of getting to the event from Canada—made me think this was something that could actually happen. Facilitated by David, there were also initial conversations at this CMESG with members of the FLM Board of Directors, who fortuitously had recently been in discussion about other things FLM Publishing Association could potentially publish.

Soon after returning from CMESG, I spoke with Laurinda to check that she was happy with us hosting an event, and to decide who else to invite, aiming for a group of around 20. In the end the decision was to limit the numbers of UK attendees, reasoning that Laurinda is still active in the Association of Teachers of Mathematics (ATM) and would continue seeing UK colleagues. There was also an early decision about the format of the symposium, linking to Laurinda’s ongoing interest in dialogue, which was to place presenters in pairs. In the final issue of FLM that Laurinda edited, 27(3), all the articles were invited conversations. Conversational articles in FLM have been a recurring feature—see David Pimm’s *Coda* in this monograph— including a dialogue in 1(1), between David Wheeler (FLM’s founding editor) and Caleb

Gattegno (who founded the ATM, an organisation that David Wheeler was heavily involved with in the 1950s and 1960s). David Wheeler was also involved in the first CMESG meeting (in 1977) where dialogue was enshrined in the still current organisation of working groups that sustain themselves for nine hours during the conference. The ATM conference had a similar organisation in its early days.

The image for the symposium was that presenters would offer something either separately, or together, then engage in an initial dialogue about each others’ ideas and finally widen the conversation out to the whole symposium. Each session would last 90 minutes, meaning that over the evening of 3 December and the whole day of 4 December there was space for five pairs of presentations. In Laurinda’s piece of writing for this monograph, she writes of a way of working that was promoted at ATM meetings in the 1970s (and that I recognised at CMESG, in 2018), a way of working that was the hope for the symposium also. My first experience of such a discipline around communication was through involvement in an ATM working group in the 1990s (the *Science of Education* group, led by Dick Tahta and others). I remember trying to work out what *kinds* of things people were saying, and when something said generated the engagement of others, and when not. Reputations, anecdotes, rehearsed stories or arguments were all distrusted. I would now describe what was going on in meetings as an exploration of the current experience of participants, articulating and probing new awarenesses, based on present actions and reactions.

It was Richard Barwell who suggested the focus on learning, for the symposium, given this has been a thread through all of Laurinda’s writing. Presenters were asked to come to the event with a first draft of a FLM-style article, on the theme of learning, making a more or less explicit mention of Laurinda’s contribution to their own thinking and development. The theme of learning is, of course, central to FLM’s mission; in the editorial of the first issue, David Wheeler wrote of his hope that, “this journal may grow into one that learns along with its writers and its readers”. Soon after the symposium, the FLM Board of Directors agreed to a review and editorial process through which presentations and articles could become the inaugural FLM monograph.

I wonder what David Wheeler might have made of this? Would he consider a series of monographs a form of learning for the journal? He might be intrigued that the contributors include all subsequent editors of FLM (David Pimm, Laurinda, Brent Davis, Richard Barwell, David Reid). I wonder what themes, present at the inception of ATM, CMESG and FLM, he might recognise? I hope he would find familiar the interrogation of experience in these articles and the commitment to an on-going learning about the learning of mathematics, a commitment that Laurinda embodies and inspires.